



Birbal the Witty



THE TEN GREATEST FOOLS

AS THE EMPEROR, I MEET ONLY WISE AND LEARNED MEN, BIRBAL, NEVER A FOOL. SHOW ME THE TEN GREATEST FOOLS IN THE CITY.

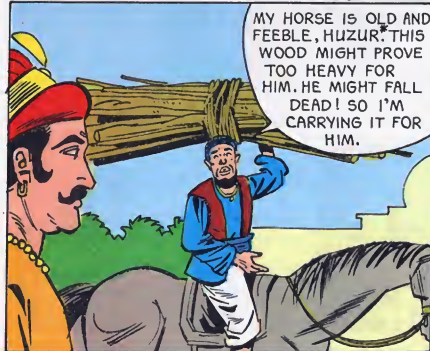
AKBAR OFTEN ASKED BIRBAL TO DO THE STRANGEST OF THINGS, BUT THIS ONE BEAT THEM ALL.

I'LL GIVE YOU A MONTH TO FIND THEM.

IT SHOULD BE NO PROBLEM, JAHANPANAH. I MAY NOT NEED ALL THAT TIME.

AS BIRBAL WENT ABOUT THE CITY LOOKING FOR FOOLS, HE CAME UPON A STRANGE SIGHT.

WHY DO YOU CARRY THAT BUNDLE ON YOUR HEAD INSTEAD OF PLACING IT BEHIND YOU, ON THE SADDLE?







BIRBAL HELPED HIM UP, WITHOUT TOUCHING HIS ARMS.



NOW DROP YOUR ARMS. IF YOU COME WITH ME, I'LL BUY YOU A BEAUTIFUL SET OF POTS; FROM THE SMALLEST TO THE LARGEST SIZE!



AND YOUR WIFE
WILL BE SO
PLEASED THAT
SHE'LL NEVER
AGAIN SCOLD
YOU!



AS BIRBAL TURNED
TO MOUNT HIS HORSE—

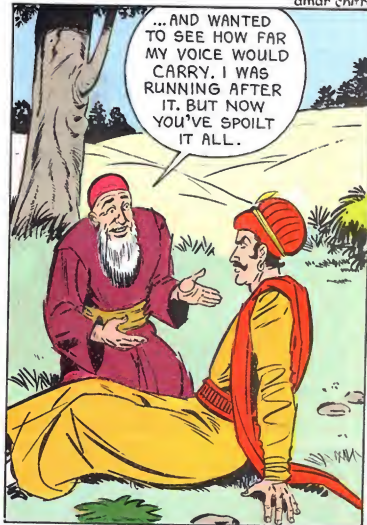


WHAT'S THE
MATTER
WITH YOU?
CAN'T YOU
SEE...

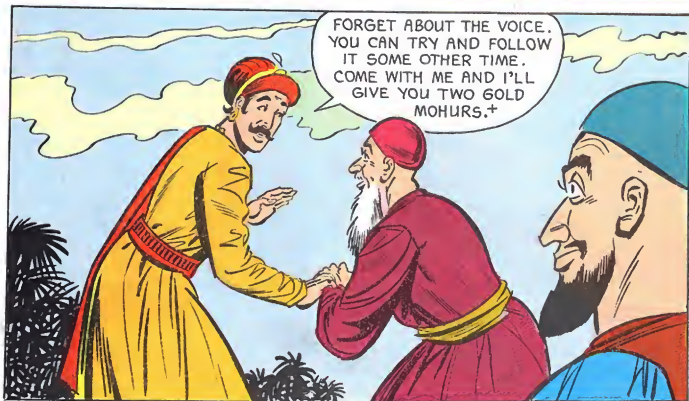
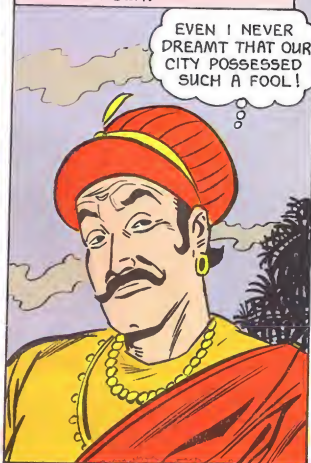


A THOUSAND PARDONS,
HUZUR. I HAD JUST
CALLED THE EVENING
PRAYER FROM THAT
MOSQUE...



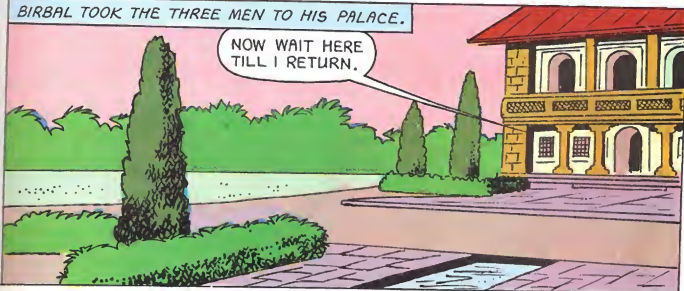


FOR A MOMENT BIRBAL STARED AT THE MAULVI,*SPEECHLESS WITH WONDER.





BIRBAL TOOK THE THREE MEN TO HIS PALACE.



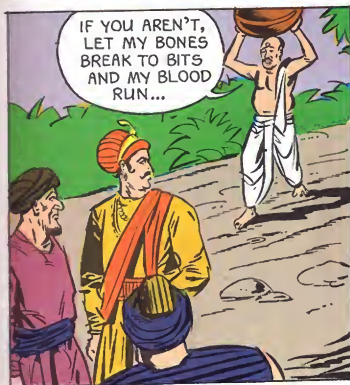
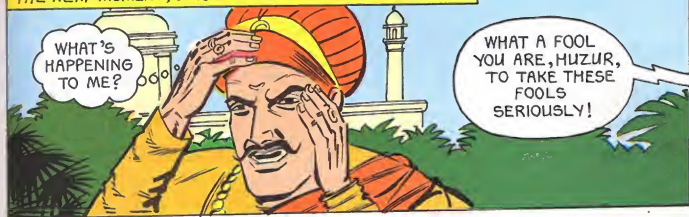
BIRBAL DID NOT HAVE TO GO FAR TO FIND MORE FOOLS.

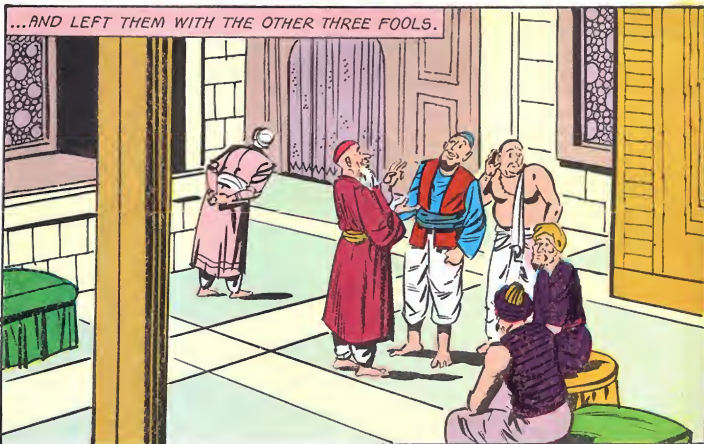






THE NEXT MOMENT, BIRBAL RECOVERED HIS COMPOSURE.

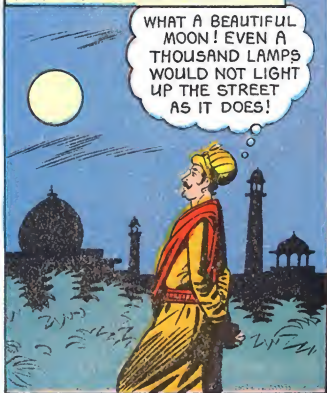




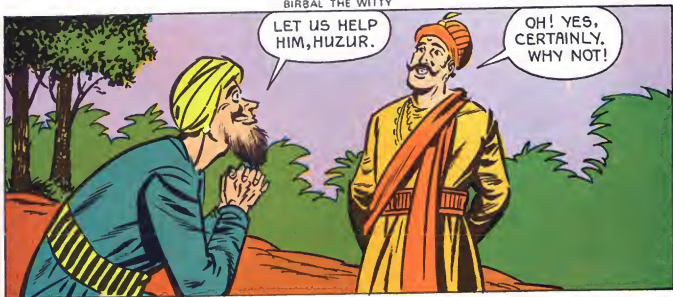
IT WAS ALMOST DARK. THE DAY'S EXPERIENCES HAD PROVED TOO MUCH, EVEN FOR BIRBAL.



A FEW HOURS LATER, AS A REFRESHED BIRBAL WAS ON HIS WAY BACK TO HIS PALACE —








THEY WALKED UP TO THE MAN.



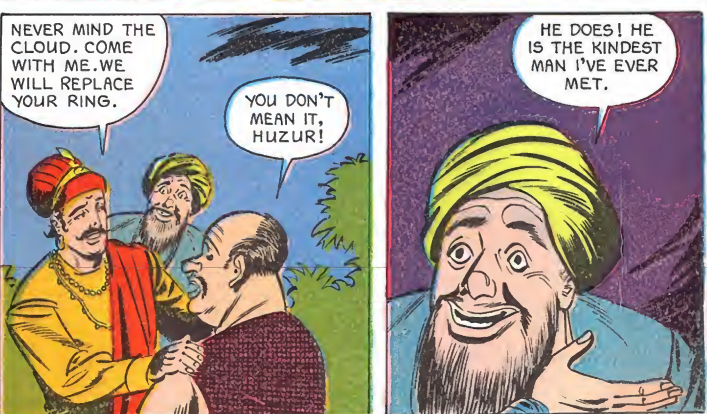


BUT NATURALLY, HUZUR! I AM NOT SUCH A FOOL. THERE WAS A CLOUD RIGHT ABOVE THE SPOT WHERE I HID THE RING.



NOW THE TREACHEROUS CLOUD HAS GONE AND SO HAS MY RING!

HE'S RIGHT, HUZUR! HOW WAS HE TO KNOW THAT THE CLOUD WOULD BETRAY HIM SO CRUELLY?



NEVER MIND THE CLOUD. COME WITH ME. WE WILL REPLACE YOUR RING.

YOU DON'T MEAN IT, HUZUR!

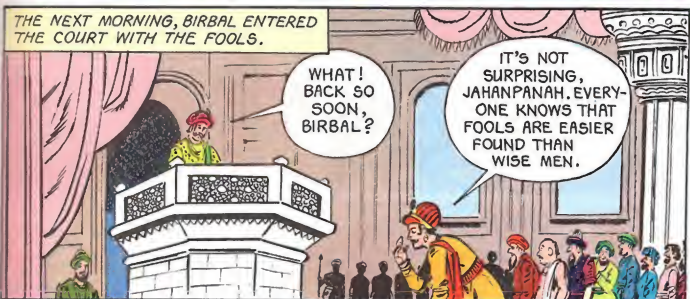
HE DOES! HE IS THE KINDEST MAN I'VE EVER MET.

BACK AT HIS PALACE—



THERE! I HAVE
EIGHT OF THEM!
FOR THE NINTH
AND THE TENTH...
WELL!

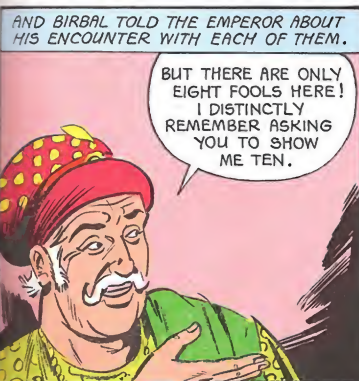
THE NEXT MORNING, BIRBAL ENTERED
THE COURT WITH THE FOOLS.



WHAT!
BACK SO
SOON,
BIRBAL?

IT'S NOT
SURPRISING,
JAHANPANA. EVERY-
ONE KNOWS THAT
FOOLS ARE EASIER
FOUND THAN
WISE MEN.

AND BIRBAL TOLD THE EMPEROR ABOUT
HIS ENCOUNTER WITH EACH OF THEM.



BUT THERE ARE ONLY
EIGHT FOOLS HERE!
I DISTINCTLY
REMEMBER ASKING
YOU TO SHOW
ME TEN.



I BEG TO
CORRECT YOU,
JAHANPANA.
THERE ARE TEN.



THE WHOLE COURT BURST OUT LAUGHING; BUT THE LOUDEST LAUGH WAS THAT OF THE EMPEROR, WHO WAS RENOWNED FOR HIS FINE SENSE OF HUMOUR.



THE CROWS OF AGRA

ONE DAY, AKBAR'S COURTIER'S CAME TO HIM WITH A COMPLAINT.

JAHANPANAH,
WHY DO YOU
ALWAYS TURN TO
BIRBAL WHEN
YOU HAVE A
PROBLEM?

BECAUSE HE
HAS AN ANSWER
FOR EVERYTHING—
A SOLUTION FOR
EVERY PROBLEM.

SO DO WE. BUT
YOU NEVER GIVE
US A CHANCE.

AH! HERE
COMES BIRBAL.
ALL RIGHT, TODAY
I WILL GIVE
ALL OF YOU A
CHANCE.

AS SOON AS BIRBAL JOINED THEM, AKBAR LOOKED UP INTO THE SKY.



THE COURTIER'S LOOKED AT ONE ANOTHER IN DISMAY.



IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO COUNT THEM, JAHANPANAH! THEY DON'T STAY IN ONE PLACE.

NOBODY CAN ANSWER THAT QUESTION, JAHANPANAH. NOT EVEN BIRBAL!



AKBAR LOOKED AT BIRBAL.

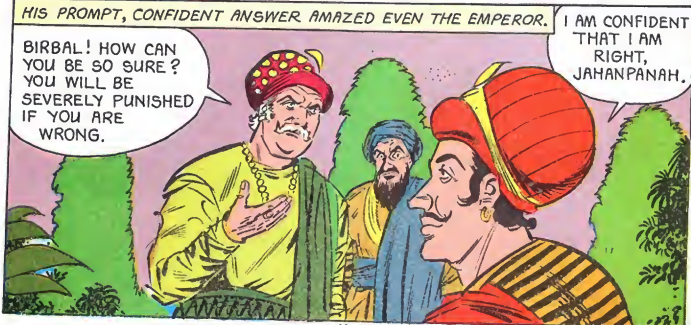
THERE ARE THIRTY-THREE THOUSAND, NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-ONE, TO BE EXACT.



HIS PROMPT, CONFIDENT ANSWER AMAZED EVEN THE EMPEROR.

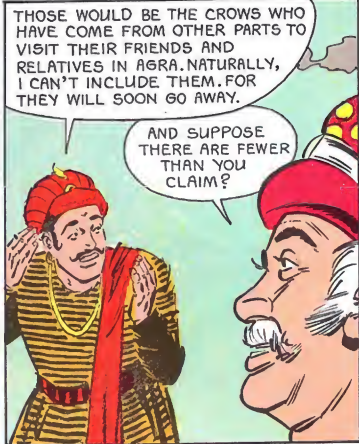
BIRBAL! HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE? YOU WILL BE SEVERELY PUNISHED IF YOU ARE WRONG.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT I AM RIGHT, JAHANPANAH.





WHAT IF THERE ARE MORE CROWS THAN YOU CLAIM?



THOSE WOULD BE THE CROWS WHO HAVE COME FROM OTHER PARTS TO VISIT THEIR FRIENDS AND RELATIVES IN AGRA. NATURALLY, I CAN'T INCLUDE THEM. FOR THEY WILL SOON GO AWAY.

AND SUPPOSE THERE ARE FEWER THAN YOU CLAIM?



OH, THAT! IT'S SIMPLE. MANY OF OUR CROWS HAVE GONE TO VISIT THEIR FRIENDS AND RELATIVES IN OTHER PARTS. NATURALLY, I HAVE NOT INCLUDED THEM IN MY COUNTING!

AS THE COURTIER SULKED IN SULLEN SILENCE, AKBAR ADDRESSED THEM TRIUMPHANTLY.

THAT'S WHY I SAY, BIRBAL HAS AN ANSWER FOR EVERYTHING! NOW DO YOU AGREE?



BIRBAL AND THE SHAH OF PERSIA

BIRBAL'S FAME AS THE WISEST, THE WITTIEST OF COURTIER, HAD REACHED EVEN THE EARS OF THE SHAH OF DISTANT PERSIA.

I MUST INVITE HIM TO MY COURT AND SEE IF HE REALLY IS AS CLEVER AS HIS REPUTATION CLAIMS.

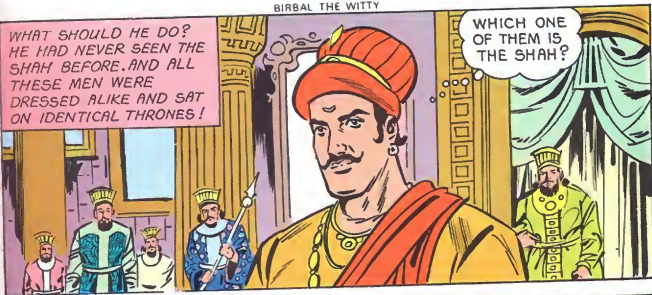
A FEW MONTHS LATER, BIRBAL CAME TO THE PERSIAN CAPITAL.

COME, HUZUR. YOU MAY PAY YOUR RESPECTS TO OUR SHAH. HE IS IMPATIENT TO SEE YOU. LET ME LEAD YOU TO HIS PRESENCE.

AS BIRBAL ENTERED THE SHAH'S DARBAR, A STRANGE SIGHT MET HIS EYES.

WHAT SHOULD HE DO?
HE HAD NEVER SEEN THE
SHAH BEFORE. AND ALL
THESE MEN WERE
DRESSED ALIKE AND SAT
ON IDENTICAL THRONES!

WHICH ONE
OF THEM IS
THE SHAH?

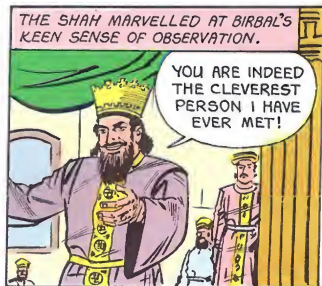
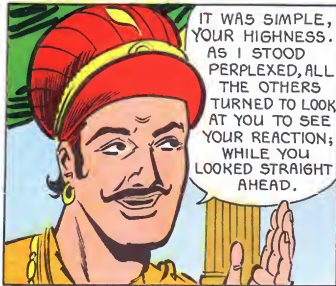


FOR A MOMENT, BIRBAL STOOD STILL
AND LET HIS GAZE TRAVEL DOWN
THE ROW OF THRONES.



WITHOUT A
DOUBT, YOU ARE
THE SHAH!





THE SEAL

AKBAR HAD THE HABIT OF DISGUIISING HIMSELF AND WANDERING ABOUT IN THE CITY — A HABIT BIRBAL DIDN'T APPROVE OF, AS HE THOUGHT IT UNSAFE.



ALL RIGHT, BIRBAL, I'M OFF.

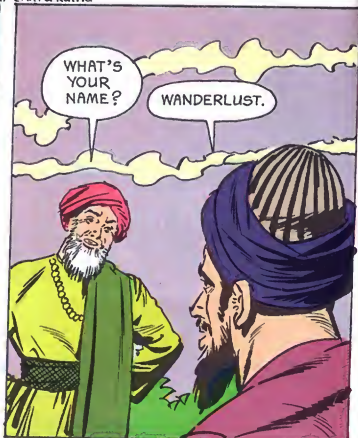
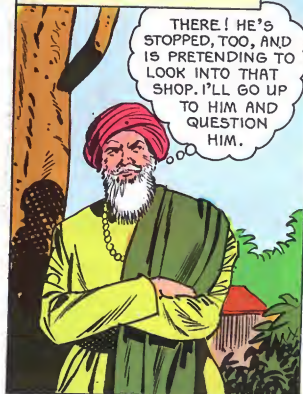
I STILL SAY YOU OUGHT TO GIVE UP THIS HABIT, JAHANPANAH. AN EMPEROR'S LIFE IS PRECIOUS AND MUST BE WELL PROTECTED.

LATER, AS AKBAR WALKED DOWN THE STREET —



I THINK I'M BEING FOLLOWED.

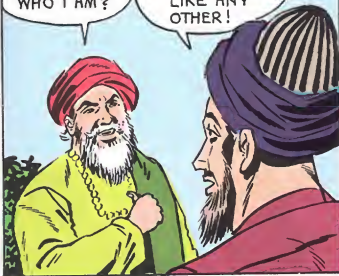
HE STOPPED IN HIS TRACKS
AND TURNED ROUND.



SO IRRITATED WAS AKBAR BY THESE ANSWERS THAT HE FORGOT HIMSELF.

DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?

A HUMAN BEING LIKE ANY OTHER!



I AM THE EMPEROR. HERE IS MY SEAL, IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME.

LET ME SEE IT.



THE STRANGER SLIPPED THE RING INTO HIS CUMMERBAND.



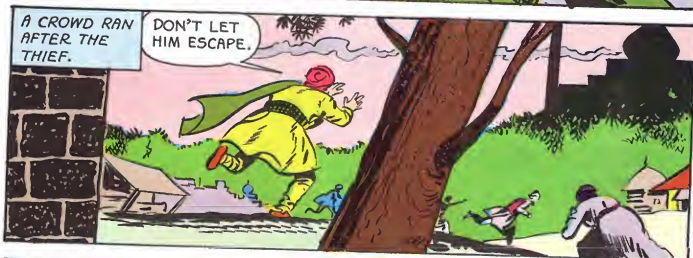
ONLY WHEN THE STRANGER BEGAN TO RUN AWAY DID AKBAR REALISE WHAT HE HAD DONE.

THIEF! THIEF! CATCH HIM! CATCH HIM!



A CROWD RAN AFTER THE THIEF.

DON'T LET HIM ESCAPE.



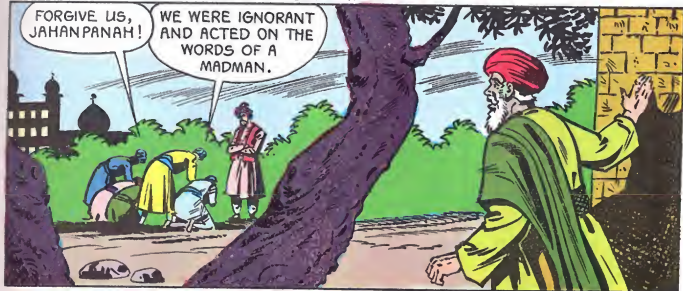
WHEN THEY CAUGHT UP WITH THE MAN-

FOOLS, DON'T YOU KNOW ME? I'M THE EMPEROR.



THIS SHOULD CONVINCE YOU, IF MY WORDS DON'T!

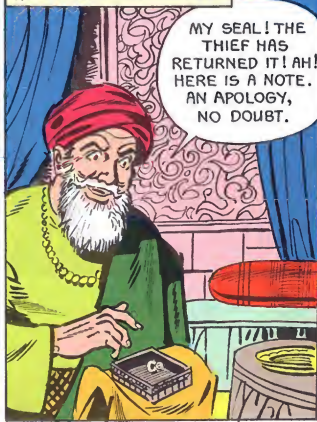




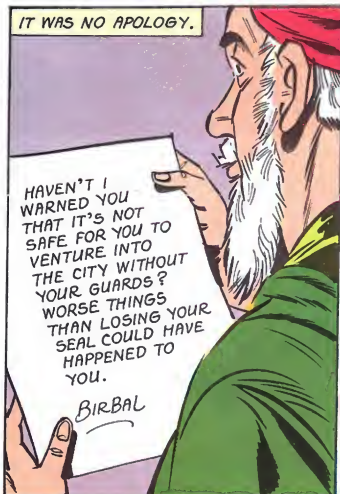
FILLED WITH SUCH THOUGHTS,
AKBAR WALKED INTO HIS CHAMBER.



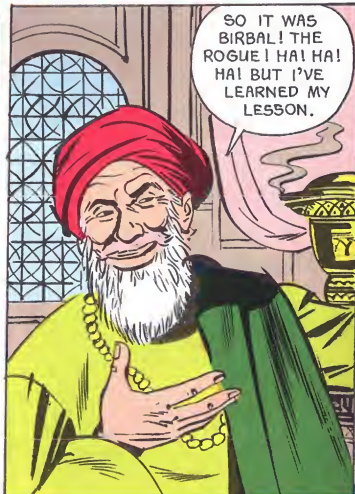
HE OPENED THE PARCEL.



IT WAS NO APOLOGY.



SO IT WAS BIRBAL! THE ROGUE! HA! HA! HA! BUT I'VE LEARNED MY LESSON.



AKBAR THE GREAT



AKBAR THOUGHT ABOUT IT FOR DAYS.

IN WHAT WAY COULD I BE GREATER THAN GOD?

UNABLE TO ANSWER THE QUESTION FOR HIMSELF, HE SET IT TO HIS COURTIER.

DO YOU THINK I AM GREATER THAN GOD? IF SO, IN WHAT WAY?

WHAT SHALL I SAY?

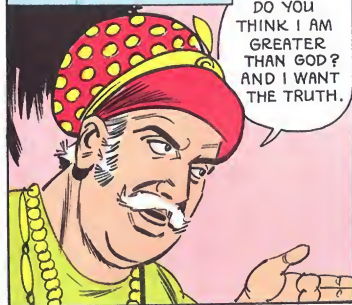
WHY DIDN'T HE ASK THE MAN WHO SAID IT?

HOW CAN I ANSWER THAT QUESTION WITHOUT EITHER DISPLEASE THE EMPEROR OR TELLING AN UNTRUTH?

WHEN, LOOKING FROM ONE FACE TO ANOTHER, AKBAR DID NOT RECEIVE AN ANSWER...



...HE TURNED TO BIRBAL.



BIRBAL,
DO YOU
THINK I AM
GREATER
THAN GOD?
AND I WANT
THE TRUTH.



WHY
JEHANPANAH,
BEYOND A
DOUBT YOU
ARE!

BIRBAL, ARE YOU
TRYING TO
FLATTER ME?



NOT AT ALL, JAHANPANAH.
THERE IS CERTAINLY
ONE THING YOU CAN
DO THAT GOD
CAN'T.





AKBAR SMILED.

